

Chapter 2

If you would attain to what you are not yet, you must always be displeased by what you are. For where you are pleased with yourself there you have remained. Keep adding, keep walking, keep advancing.

-- Saint Augustine

The problem was, I was back where I started! I didn't know where to go from here! Should I read? If so, what? I had already read a lot of books written by Christians about Christianity. They all said pretty much the same thing. Should I read about other religions? I know that many religious leaders, regardless of their religion, warn that there are certain people you should avoid talking with and certain books you shouldn't read for fear that they will cause you to doubt your faith. But I already had doubts. And I figured that if truth existed, it would somehow rise to the top over all of the lies or deceit that lay in store for me on my journey. I was determined to look under every rock for answers to my questions. If truth existed, I was determined to find out what it was. I did not want to be guilty of putting my faith and trust in something that wasn't true.

So, I began by reading. I read a few books on various other religions. I read parts of the Koran. I read some of the Hindu writings. I studied some of the works of the great philosophers. Things got worse. I realized that there were inconsistencies in all of the religious doctrines. Could truth be found in religion at all? It was time to look for someone else who could help.

Once again I thought about the preachers that I knew, and I knew a lot of them. But I was hesitant to contact them because I had learned from past experience that I would get the same unsatisfying answers that I had gotten over the years; superficial rationalizations that I had heard proclaimed from pulpits year after year. Where could I go to get a fresh perspective? Who did I know who would not try to sell me a bill of goods? I took mental inventory of all my acquaintances. Unfortunately, all of

them were of the Christian faith and I knew they would be biased. Plus, most of them probably had the same questions that I did. However, there was one person who might be of some help. I'd met him many years ago at a lecture on stress management. Being in business for myself, stress was a problem from which I had always suffered. Only a person who is self-employed can know the kind of anxieties that torture a business owner. Since that lecture, Dr. David Beckstein and I had become good friends. He was known in his profession as one of the most respected psychologists in the nation. Even though he was a member of the Jewish faith, I felt confident that he would be someone capable of discussing the topic of religion without bias. Anyway, I'd never know how much help he could be until I had spoken with him. I didn't know if he would be interested in discussing the topic at all. But, that's where I would begin.